

Prisoner Reentry

Can aid to ex-inmates significantly reduce recidivism?

Nearly three-quarters of a million prisoners will be released from state and federal prisons this year — an unprecedented number — and about half of them will be returned to prison over the next three years after committing new crimes or violating parole. As the recession makes it harder for ex-prisoners to find jobs and limits states' ability to house rising numbers of inmates, worries about revolving-door incarceration are escalating. Many experts see an answer to the problem in so-called reentry programs, which are designed to lower recidivism by helping soon-to-be-released or newly released prisoners land on their feet, sometimes assisting them in getting jobs before leaving prison. But even after enactment of former President George W. Bush's Second Chance Act, which supports reentry programs, they remain relatively scarce. In fact, in many states, funding for prison needs has overtaken proposals to pay for reentry.



Ex-inmate Ronald Birkmire Jr. found work with a Philadelphia construction firm despite his assault record. To reduce recidivism, a new city program offers \$10,000 tax credits to businesses that hire ex-offenders and provide them tuition help or vocational training.

INSIDE THIS REPORT

THE ISSUES	1007
BACKGROUND	1014
CHRONOLOGY	1015
CURRENT SITUATION	1020
AT ISSUE	1021
OUTLOOK	1023
BIBLIOGRAPHY	1026
THE NEXT STEP	1027

CQ Researcher • Dec. 4, 2009 • www.cqresearcher.com
Volume 19, Number 42 • Pages 1005-1028



RECIPIENT OF SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE ♦ AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION SILVER GAVEL AWARD

THE ISSUES

- 1007 • Are state governments doing enough to help prisoners reenter society?
• Should government or private organizations provide subsidized jobs for ex-prisoners?
• Do reentry programs significantly reduce recidivism?

BACKGROUND

- 1014 **Crime Boom**
Crime took center stage in the 1970s and '80s.
- 1014 **Mandatory Minimums**
"Indeterminate" sentences became the focus of controversy.
- 1017 **Incarceration Boom**
Tougher laws led to more prison admissions.
- 1019 **Reentry Reality**
Recidivism rates continued to remain high.

CURRENT SITUATION

- 1020 **Upgrading Skills**
Rehab programs develop sustainable career goals for former inmates.

- 1022 **California Meltdown**
The state is broke and trying to deal with overcrowded prisons.

OUTLOOK

- 1023 **Change in Tone**
Conservatives and liberals both support reentry.

SIDEBARS AND GRAPHICS

- 1008 **Prisoner Releases Almost Equal Admissions**
The number of prisoners released each year nearly equals the number incarcerated.

- 1009 **Many Inmates Didn't Finish High School**
Only one in eight has post-secondary education.

- 1010 **Jobs Program Reduced Recidivism Slightly**
Six percent fewer ex-inmates were rearrested.

- 1012 **Prison Population Tops 2.2 Million Inmates**
Half are in state prisons.

- 1015 **Chronology**
Key events since 1970.

- 1016 **Halfway House Puts Focus on Jobs**
"If you want to change your life, this is where you can."

- 1018 **Reentry Experts Try to Answer '\$64,000 Question'**
"We still have much to learn about what works."

- 1021 **At Issue**
Can reentry and rehabilitation programs reduce recidivism?

FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

- 1025 **For More Information**
Organizations to contact.

- 1026 **Bibliography**
Selected sources used.

- 1027 **The Next Step**
Additional articles.

- 1027 **Citing CQ Researcher**
Sample bibliography formats.

Dec. 4, 2009
Volume 19, Number 42

MANAGING EDITOR: Thomas J. Colin
tcolin@cqpress.com

ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR: Kathy Koch
kkoch@cqpress.com

ASSOCIATE EDITOR: Kenneth Jost

STAFF WRITERS: Thomas J. Billitteri,
Marcia Clemmitt, Peter Katel

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS: Rachel Cox,
Sarah Glazer, Alan Greenblatt, Reed Karam
Barbara Mantel, Patrick Marshall,
Tom Price, Jennifer Weeks

DESIGN/PRODUCTION EDITOR: Olu B. Davis

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Darrell Dela Rosa

EDITORIAL INTERN: Emily DeRuy

FACT-CHECKING: Eugene J. Gabler,
Michelle Harris



A Division of SAGE

PRESIDENT AND PUBLISHER:
John A. Jenkins

Copyright © 2009 CQ Press, a Division of SAGE. SAGE reserves all copyright and other rights herein, unless previously specified in writing. No part of this publication may be reproduced electronically or otherwise, without prior written permission. Unauthorized reproduction or transmission of SAGE copyrighted material is a violation of federal law carrying civil fines of up to \$100,000.

CQ Press is a registered trademark of Congressional Quarterly Inc.

CQ Researcher (ISSN 1056-2036) is printed on acid-free paper. Published weekly, except; (Jan. wk. 1) (May wk. 4) (July wks. 1, 2) (Aug. wks. 3, 4) (Nov. wk. 4) and (Dec. wk. 4), by CQ Press, a division of SAGE Publications. Annual full-service subscriptions start at \$803. For pricing, call 1-800-834-9020, ext. 1906. To purchase a *CQ Researcher* report in print or electronic format (PDF), visit www.cqpress.com or call 866-427-7737. Single reports start at \$15. Bulk purchase discounts and electronic-rights licensing are also available. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *CQ Researcher*, 2300 N St., N.W., Suite 800, Washington, DC 20037.

Prisoner Reentry

BY PETER KATEL

THE ISSUES

When the big question comes — and it will — don't slouch in your chair, look down and mumble that you were in the wrong place at the wrong time. "That doesn't work," Hillel Raskas tells a quiet group of new residents at a pre-release center in the Washington suburb of Rockville, Md.

Instead, when the job interviewer asks if you've been convicted of a crime, Work-Release Coordinator Raskas advises the nine men and two women to sit up straight, look him in the eye and say: "Here's something I need to tell you. I have a conviction; I sold a few drugs, I made a mistake. I'm in a work-release program. I've been approved to work. I'm ready to work. I know what I need to do. I'm the right man, I'm the right woman. I'll be here every day."

With that approach, Raskas says, you'll have a real shot at the job.

If the newcomers at the Montgomery County corrections department's Pre-Release Center manage to get employed, put their pasts behind them and never enter another prison or jail, they will be among the fortunate 48 percent of America's growing army of ex-prisoners — 725,000-strong in 2007 — who are not re-incarcerated.¹

The revolving-door nature of crime and punishment is plaguing lawmakers and policy experts nationwide. Caught up in the Great Recession, they're trying to dig their way out of budget disasters, and only Medicaid soaks up more state general fund money than prison systems — an estimated \$47 billion in fiscal 2008.²



Inmate William Gray learns work skills at the Department of Corrections reentry facility in Plainfield, Ind. Many experts say reentry programs designed to help ex-prisoners land on their feet are an answer to the nation's rising prison population and high recidivism rate. But with states battered by the recession, relatively few reentry programs have been started.

AP Photo/John Harrell

In this atmosphere, calls to improve ex-prisoners' "reentry" chances are ringing more loudly than ever. With or without help, 95 percent of all prisoners in the United States are released. Reentry programs are designed to help them navigate the range of demands and needs they face — from finding a job and a place to live to dealing with drug or alcohol habits or psychological problems connected with past crimes. The emphasis on practical solutions largely distinguishes "reentry" from "rehabilitation" — a term mostly used in connection with attempts to help prisoners learn new skills and attitudes while they're incarcerated.

"We've got an unprecedented volume of people coming out of prison and jail,"

says Michael Thompson, director of the Council of State Governments' Justice Center, which has been working with state governments on the issue since 2001. At the same time, "Policy makers are looking at very high failure rates of people coming out of prison. That's obviously a public-safety problem. And states don't have the money to keep growing the prison and jail population. Suddenly you've got more momentum for improving reentry success rates than ever before."

It's no secret why so many prisoners are being released. As crime rates began rising in the 1970s, politicians began passing tough-on-crime laws that sent prison and jail populations soaring. At the same time, rehabilitation programs came to be seen as ineffective in curbing crime and fell out of favor. Prisons' main mission became punishment and removal from society. Even as prison populations soared, remedial education programs served fewer and

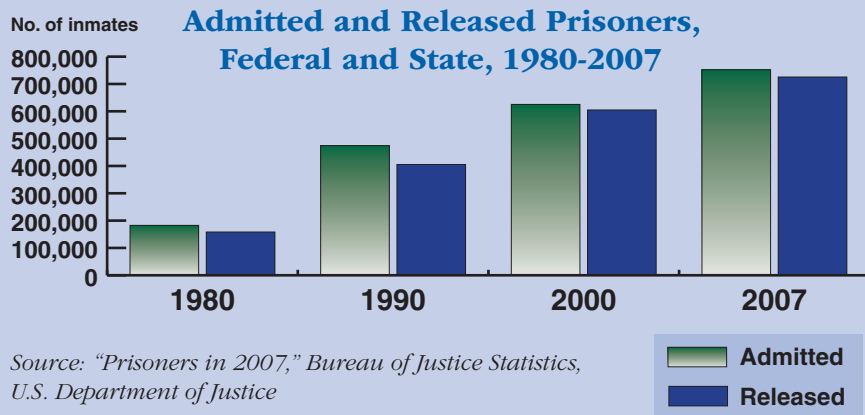
fewer prisoners, the nonprofit Urban Institute reported in 2004.³

Although crime rates had begun falling by the early '90s, the effects of toughened sentencing laws still resonate: U.S. prisons and jails held more than 2 million prisoners by 2003 — the world's largest prison population, both per capita and in absolute terms. By 2007, America's prison population had grown to nearly 2.3 million.

In this climate, reentry programs are gaining ground. "As few as 10 years ago, very few state departments of corrections had divisions devoted to reentry," Thompson says. "But today every department of corrections in the country will identify for you a person in charge of administering reentry programs."

Prisoner Releases Almost Equal Admissions

More than 750,000 prisoners were admitted to federal and state prisons in 2007, quadruple the number in 1980. In 1980, the number of released prisoners was 87 percent of the total number admitted that year. By 2007, releases had reached 96 percent of admissions.



"In order to reduce recidivism you can't hand them 100 bucks, a new suit and a bus ticket," says Florida state Sen. Victor D. Crist, a Tampa Republican (no relation to Gov. Charlie Crist) who helped toughen sentencing laws in the 1990s, but who argues that Florida doesn't do enough to get soon-to-be-released prisoners ready for their new lives. "You've got to help them establish a work ethic, cultivate meaningful skills and transition from life in the big house."

All reentry programs share those broad objectives, but the scale and scope vary widely. Michigan, for example, launched in 2005 what has grown into the statewide Michigan Prison ReEntry Initiative (MPRI), designed to provide each released prisoner with a "transition plan" as well as services designed to help with employment, housing and other matters. Coupled with early releases of some prisoners, MPRI is allowing the state to close up to three state prisons and five prison camps.⁴

Some observers are holding the applause, however. "We're suspicious," says Mel Grieshaber, executive direc-

tor of the Michigan Corrections Organization, the prison employees' union. "We support the objective of keeping bad people from committing other crimes, and it seems to us that more objective data should be available to prove that it's working."

Some liberals are also raising questions. "I'm very supportive of reentry, but it leaves out the question of sentencing policy, which is driving prison numbers in the first place," says Marc Mauer, executive director of the Sentencing Project, which advocates alternatives to incarceration. "As long as we continue to send so many people to prison and increasingly keep them there for long periods of time, reentry is just trying to bail out the problem."

Still, reentry has risen to the top of the agenda in nearly all states. Kansas, New York and other states are also reducing their prison populations and recidivism rates by, among other things, expanding reentry services. Even Texas — long known for a hard-line approach to crime and punishment — rejected a prison expansion plan in 2007, creating instead the \$241 million Justice Rein-

vestment Initiative designed in part to lower recidivism.⁵

At the other extreme is California, which took no steps to lower an ever-expanding prison population — now the nation's highest at about 150,000 inmates, many of them parole violators — until federal judges in August ordered the state to do so. (See "Current Situation," p. 1022.) The state's latest plan to reduce its prison population by 40,000 over two years does include some reentry assistance.⁶

But even where reentry programs are being expanded, most newly released prisoners — and the neighborhoods to which nearly all of them return — still face enormous obstacles. "These communities — already struggling with poor schools, poor health care and weak labor markets — are now shouldering the burden of reintegrating record numbers of returning prisoners," says Jeremy Travis, president of John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York.⁷

Though states make their own laws and build their own prisons, the federal government plays an influential role, in part via the grant-making process. The Justice Department has disbursed \$28 million in grants this year to reentry programs.

"Even a modest reduction in recidivism rates would prevent thousands of crimes and save hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars," U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder told the Vera Institute of Justice, last July.⁸

In promoting reentry, the Obama administration is following in the footsteps of its two predecessors. In 1999, President Bill Clinton's Attorney General Janet Reno formally launched what her then-adviser Travis calls the "reentry movement." And to the surprise of many, President George W. Bush — a classic tough-on-crime politician — took up the cause in his 2004 State of the Union address. "America is the land of second chances, and when the gates of the prison

open, the path ahead should lead to a better life.”⁹

Inescapable socioeconomic realities pose a major obstacle. Only 46 percent of all prison and jail inmates have high-school diplomas or GEDs.¹⁰

“Eighty percent of the people who come to CEO [Center for Employment Opportunities] have reading and math scores below eighth grade,” says Mindy S. Tarlow, executive director of the New York-based non-governmental job placement program for ex-prisoners.

But while reentry programs and prison downsizing may appeal to cash-strapped state lawmakers, economic conditions are hindering reentering prisoners’ job hunts. That’s especially true for people like a man in his early 40s who was among Raskas’ trainees at the Montgomery County Pre-Release Center. (See sidebar, p. 1016.) The former career drug dealer is finishing a three-year sentence for possession of cocaine with intent to distribute. His record shows four other drug charges and a few relatively minor offenses.

“I wasted a lot of time in life,” he tells staff members. But he says he has turned a page and wants to support himself legally. “I actually don’t have a problem working.”

Center staff will help him refine that sales pitch. Recession or not, they say, someone somewhere is always hiring. Raskas, a former businessman and congressional staffer, tells his class that he’s helped 1,400 people with backgrounds similar to theirs find work. “Eighty-five percent of people leave here with a job.”

As criminal justice officials and reentry advocates struggle with how to help prisoners reestablish themselves in their communities, here are some of the questions being debated:

Are state governments doing enough to help prisoners reenter society?

The basic argument for expanding reentry programs is simple: Virtually all

Many Inmates Didn’t Finish High School

More than 40 percent of inmates in the nation’s prisons and jails in 1997 had not completed high school or its equivalent, according to the most recent data available from the U.S. Justice Department. By comparison, only 18 percent of the general population over age 18 had not finished 12th grade.

Educational Attainment of Inmates

Education level	Total incarcerated	State	Federal	Local jail inmates	Probationers	General population
High school or less	41.3%	39.7%	26.5%	46.5%	30.6%	18.4%
GED	23.4	28.5	22.7	14.1	11.0	n/a
High-school diploma	22.6	20.5	27.0	25.9	34.8	33.2
Postsecondary	12.7	11.4	23.9	13.5	23.6	48.4

Source: Caroline Wolf Harlow, “Educational and Correctional Populations,” Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, January 2003

prisoners will be released except those serving life sentences without the possibility of parole or facing execution. But if at least half of them will be returning to prison or jail, reducing that number by helping ex-prisoners gain a foothold in the outside world would be good for them — and for society.

Supporters of expanded reentry programs point out that even as state governments face budgetary strains ranging from serious to catastrophic, they can cut long-term prison costs by spending on reentry instead of on prison space, which is more expensive. States spend an average of \$22,650 yearly to maintain one prisoner.¹¹

However, to make that case to state legislatures, advocates must show hard data on which kinds of reentry programs lower recidivism most effectively. But solid numbers only now are being assembled and reported. Recidivism among New York’s CEO program participants, for instance, was 5.7 percent lower over a three-year period than in a control group of ex-prisoners not in the program. (See sidebar, p. 1018.)

But even without precise statistics on which kinds of programs are most effective, plenty of evidence shows approaches that don’t work, say reentry program advocates.

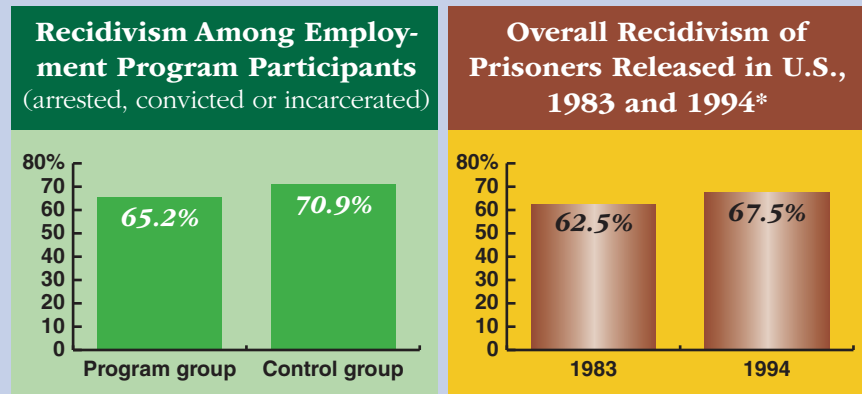
For example, California imposes parole supervision on virtually all released prisoners — but doesn’t have money for intensive supervision. The result: 66 percent of ex-prisoners returned to prison in 2003-2004 — compared with a national rate of 40 percent at that time. Two-thirds of those sent back to prison had violated parole conditions, according to a recent Justice Department study, which showed a dearth of reentry services.

“It is estimated that two-thirds or more of all California parolees have substance-abuse problems, and nearly all of them are required to be drug tested,” the study’s authors reported. “Yet few of them will participate in appropriate treatment while in prison or on parole.”¹²

Former prison inmate and California Republican state legislator Pat Nolan, now vice president of Prison Fellowship, a Christian rehabilitation group,

Jobs Program Reduced Recidivism Slightly

About 6 percent fewer ex-prisoners who participated in a jobs program were arrested, convicted or incarcerated within three years, compared with ex-prisoners who did not participate (left). The program provided coaching in life and jobs skills and assistance in finding a job. Among nearly 300,000 prisoners released in 15 states in 1994, more than two-thirds were rearrested within three years (right).* The recidivism rate was slightly lower in 1983.



* The recidivism results are based on a 2002 study of 1994 data, which are the most recent available. The 272,111 former inmates released in 1994 represented two-thirds of all prisoners released in the United States that year.

Sources: Patrick A. Langan and David J. Levin, "Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994," Bureau of Justice Statistics, June 2002; Cindy Redcross, "Transitional Jobs for Ex-Prisoners," Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, November 2009.

calls the combination of newly released prisoners with drug problems and a near-absence of treatment programs "one of the great scandals of our current California prison system."¹³

Nolan argues that the rigid enforcement of parole conditions such as no drug use means that ex-prisoners get sent back for relatively minor offenses. "Drug possession — bam, you take them [back] to prison," he says. "This guy can have a job, be supporting his family; he shouldn't use drugs, but do you want to disrupt his life, send him back to prison, for a first [parole] offense?"

But some prison system veterans say more reentry programs won't necessarily produce ex-prisoners better prepared to reenter society. "You can't make someone rehabilitate himself,"

says Gary B. King, a 19-year veteran of the Florida Corrections Department, one of the country's biggest prison agencies. "Over the years, what I have seen as the most rehabilitative thing we do is when we hold people accountable for their actions; when an inmate commits an infraction we apply administrative sanctions. The more we make them follow the rules while they're in prison, and do that across the board, the more we prepare them for going back into society."

King is now a classification officer who supervises individual prisoners' disciplinary records, progress reports and participation in educational or other programs at Columbia Correctional Institute, a medium-security institution near Lake City, Fla. He doubts a stronger emphasis on rehabilitation and reentry

would make a big dent in Florida's recidivism rate. Nevertheless, he acknowledges that work-release programs do make sense for some prisoners nearing the end of their sentences, so they can experience the very different world outside prison. "Some inmates inside an institutional setting can do very well because their daily schedule is regimented, and they are quarantined from bad behavior and substance abuse," he says. "Once at liberty to do as they please and associate with whomever they please, they do not do well. Some inmates do not seem to handle well the responsibility that comes with freedom."

Yet even Crist, the conservative Republican Florida state senator, argues that the slim chances some prisoners have of staying out of trouble after release shouldn't block the state from expanding reentry programs for inmates who could benefit. "About one-third of the inmate population are hardened; you're going to have very little impact on them," he says. "Another two-thirds [deserve] a running chance."

Moreover, some prisoners with violent pasts may do well on the outside. "Somebody can go to prison with a first-degree felony and serve time and have an excellent track record and go through psychological testing and work release and have an excellent chance in the community," he says.

But some conservative experts who support reentry expansion on principle question how well helping hardcore prisoners reenter can be carried out in practice. "We don't know a lot about what works," says David B. Mulhausen, a senior policy analyst at the conservative Heritage Foundation's Center for Data Analysis. "Usually, the impact is rather small, and other communities haven't always been successful in replicating it."

Moreover, Mulhausen is skeptical about what he views as the political leanings of reentry advocates. "A lot of people [favoring] reentry programs really don't like prison," he says.

"They don't give credit to the fact that the drop in crime we've had in the past several years is partly due to incarceration."

But the Sentencing Project, the leading alternatives-to-incarceration organization, says that while imprisonment plays a role in the drop in crime, that role may be smaller than Mulhausen and others assert. Crime dropped by about 12 percent in 1998-2003 in states with high imprisonment — and declined by the same rate in states in which incarceration diminished or stayed the same.

"There was no discernible pattern of states with higher rates of incarceration experiencing more significant declines in crime," project staffers wrote.¹⁴

Should government or private organizations provide subsidized jobs for ex-prisoners?

Jobs are a major focus of virtually all reentry programs, and the No. 1 objective of most newly released prisoners. Their prospects are bleak, however, since their résumés indicate that they are former jail or prison inmates, and many have been outside the conventional workforce for most, if not all, of their lives and often have little education.

"Compared with the general population, those in prison were approximately twice as likely not to have completed high school or attained a GED," the Urban Institute reported in 2004. "And four times the number of young males in the general population had attended some college or post-secondary courses, compared with incarcerated males."¹⁵

Moreover, the vast expansion of the prison population far outpaced programs designed to help prisoners improve their prospects upon release, the institute concluded. "Only about half of the total inmate population receives educational or vocational training, a proportion that has been decreasing over time."¹⁶

But even where programs do exist, training and coaching can't improve

Parole Violations in Calif. Boost Recidivism

Two-thirds of California's offenders return to prison within three years, with nearly a third sent back for parole violations — a much higher rate than in other large states. A big reason for the higher violation rate is that virtually all offenders released in California go on parole supervision, while most large states do not have that policy. In addition, California has a large population of young offenders with criminal records, who tend to have higher recidivism rates.

Three-Year Recidivism Rates in California vs. Selected Big States

State	Returned to Jail or Prison		
	New Crime	Technical Violation	Total
	(by percentage)		
California	37%	32%	69%
Florida	32	8	40
Illinois	40	4	44
New York	49	14	63
North Carolina	45	8	53
Texas	31	7	38

Source: Ryan G. Fischer, "Are California's Recidivism Rates Really the Highest in the Nation? It Depends on What Measure of Recidivism You Use," Center for Evidence-Based Corrections, University of California-Irvine, September 2005

the grim employment environment that ex-prisoners enter upon leaving jails and prisons.

However, researchers find that former prisoners who land jobs do a better job of staying out of trouble. "Respondents who were employed and earning higher wages after release were less likely to return to prison the first year out," another group of Urban Institute researchers reported last year.¹⁷

For some reentry advocates, the best way to keep recidivism down — even in a dismal job climate — is to subsidize temporary jobs for ex-inmates in order to get them on the employment track. The nonprofit Joyce Foundation of Chicago created experimen-

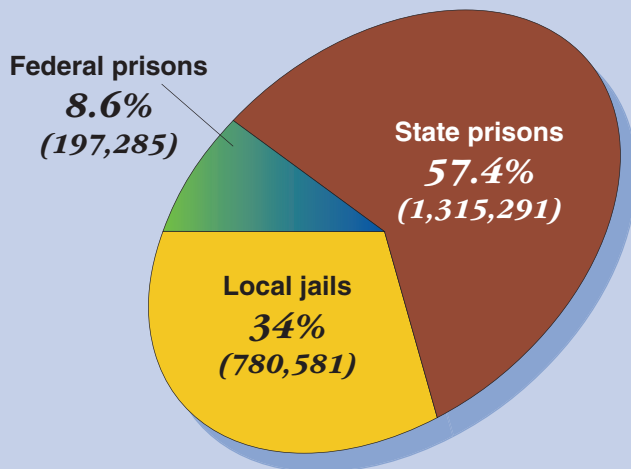
tal "transitional jobs" programs in 2006 in Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee and St. Paul in order to acquire data on whether the strategy — based on providing jobs for about four months to a total of about 1,800 ex-prisoners — helped participants avoid returning to prison. Results are expected in 2010.¹⁸

Director Tarlow of New York's CEO program argues that subsidizing jobs can attract public and political support, even when workers without prison records are having a hard time landing a job. "The cost of putting somebody in prison is five to six times greater than the cost of serving someone at CEO," Tarlow says. "You can't talk about the cost of CEO outside the context of not having CEO."

Prison Population Tops 2.2 Million Inmates

Nearly 2.3 million inmates were in custody in state and federal prisons and local jails in 2007. Slightly more than half were in state prisons, and about a third were in local jails.

Number of U.S. Inmates, December 2007



Source: Heather C. West and William J. Sabol, "Prisoners in 2007," Bureau of Justice Statistics, Dec. 31, 2008

Moreover, she adds, "The more dire the fiscal situation is, the more likely it is that [a state] government will take risks. In extremely difficult economic times, when prisons are overcrowded and incredibly expensive to run, so many people get incarcerated when they come out. Why? Because they don't have a job."

But Grieshaber, at the Michigan union for prison system employees, cites the state's 15.3 percent unemployment rate as a definitive obstacle to providing subsidized jobs.¹⁹ "With this kind of unemployment, it's just impossible," he says.

Michigan's wide-ranging reentry program includes job-search assistance, Grieshaber notes. "But if anybody brought up subsidizing jobs — my goodness," he says. "You've already got people complaining about prisoners getting paid for working in the prisons."

Others also warn that the present bleak employment climate isn't the right

political environment for a subsidized-jobs strategy. "There are people out of work who have never broken any law and aren't being offered that kind of job," Nolan of Prison Fellowship says.

But when the jobs picture improves, "I can see the advantage of a subsidized job," he says, especially for ex-prisoners with no formal employment experience who must learn to function in a workplace before they enter the labor market. "A lot of people have never had a job. A job teaches them discipline, showing up on time, to call if they're going to be late."

Others argue against subsidizing jobs. Montgomery County, Md., Corrections and Rehabilitation Director Art Wallenstein, an ardent reentry advocate, says a subsidized-jobs program would entangle his agency in political complications. "I don't want reentry to get bogged down on the issue of whether our unemployed are more valuable than your unem-

ployed," he says. "I can live without subsidized jobs."

Wallenstein isn't philosophically opposed to the subsidized-jobs strategy but argues that they're not essential. "I believe there are jobs out there," he says. "We can get offenders workforce-ready if we don't rely on magic but on tested, workforce-development programs that prepare people to engage in the job market. We don't need a leg up for offenders."

Do reentry programs significantly reduce recidivism?

Reentry programs have a major selling point: reducing recidivism. "The high recidivism rates that translate into thousands of new crimes each year could easily be averted through improved reentry efforts," New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg told a Summit on Reentry and Employment held by the U.S. Conference of Mayors last year in New York.

"To keep inmates on the right path once they leave, we will link them to the benefits they need immediately upon release. They've paid their debt — but with no prospects, sadly, too many of them will return to jail. Let's help them build their future — which will help keep all of us safe."²⁰

Experts readily acknowledge, however, that data is not yet available on which reentry strategies produce the best results. In Michigan, for instance, reentry program participants haven't been free long enough "to draw anything other than preliminary conclusions about recidivism findings," Dennis Schrantz, deputy director of the Michigan corrections department, told the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies last March.²¹

But, in a sign of how the pendulum has swung from the days in which longer sentences were seen as the best approach to fighting crime, Schrantz also told lawmakers that the model of

widespread and lengthy incarceration clearly was ineffective. "Prisoners who serve longer terms do not recidivate less frequently," he said. "Rearrest rates for former prisoners who serve one, two, three, four or five years in prison are nearly the same."²²

However, so many politicians and policy experts are singing the praises of reentry that even some of those advocates worry that the concept could be dismissed as a fad, especially by prison system personnel.

"One of the problems we face with the corrections folks is that reentry has become the flavor of the month," says Nolan of Prison Fellowship. "They're basically tired of being guinea pigs. Frankly, reentry can mean all things to all people, so I can understand the jaundiced response."

"We want programs that work," says Grieshaber of the Michigan correction employees' union. "We're just suspicious that you don't get an honest evaluation when there are these massive budget pressures. We're kind of — 'Proceed with caution' on the whole thing."

More pointedly, Grieshaber questions whether politicians' recent call for greater emphasis on reentry is purely budget-driven. "If we didn't have these dramatic budget pressures, would we be letting all these prisoners out?" he asks. "A lot of us think the answer would be 'no.'"

But in Colorado, Attorney General John Suthers, a conservative Republican, argues that saving money by cutting recidivism is a worthwhile objective. "The vast majority of inmates going into prison every year are recidivists," he says. "If you can significantly reduce that, you can make tremendous savings."

Suthers acknowledges that recidivism declines are measured in small quantities. "Don't kid yourself — you're not going to reduce recidivism by 10 percent to 50 percent," he says. "But I do think 5 percent to 10 percent is possible, and well worth the effort."



AP Photo/The Herald-Palladium/John Madill



AP Photo/Steven Senne

Second Chances

Former inmate Tony Monk (top, foreground) landed a job at Regal Finishing in Coloma, Mich., after completing the state's Prisoner Reentry Initiative Program. He holds tractor headlight reflectors coated at the Regal plant. His boss, Jim Kodis, left, says Regal co-workers' support of Monk was critical to his success. Joshua Gomes (bottom) is a free man thanks to a new Rhode Island law that allows certain prisoners to get out early if they commit to rehabilitation programs. Gomes, 24, of Central Falls, R.I., went to prison after stealing a man's wallet and robbing a convenience store to feed his cocaine habit. He served about half of his two-year sentence.

Ordinary citizens might not consider that much of a drop. James M. Byrne, a professor of criminology at the University of Massachusetts, noted that although drug treatment, educational and other programs could cut “criminal behavior” by about 10 percent, bigger reductions would require social programs in “high-crime/poverty pocket” areas.²³

“I suspect that the general public — already wary of the prospects for individual offender change — will be expecting a bit more for their investment in rehabilitation than marginal reductions in offender recidivism,” Byrne told the House Appropriations subcommittee’s March hearing on reentry programs.

Some optimists say the widespread emphasis on reentry programs could evolve into an approach with enormous potential. “The next frontier,” says John Jay College president Travis, “is community-level intervention.

“People return to settings that are governed by institutions like family and peer groups and social interactions,” he says. “Are they welcomed back home or shunned? Do we pay attention to the availability of positive peer group networks as opposed to the old gang on the corner?” ■

BACKGROUND

Crime Boom

Starting in the early 1970s, and fueled in the '80s by growing drug-related violence, the nation’s crime rate skyrocketed, and fear of crime grew into a leading issue in cities and states — and eventually in Congress.²⁴

After growing steadily throughout the 1960s, crime shot up in the '70s and '80s. By 1990, the violent crime rate had more than quadrupled —

from 160.9 per 100,000 population in 1960 to 731.8.²⁵

During this period, harsh new anti-drug laws played a key role in boosting prison populations. In 1980, just 19,000 drug offenders were in state prisons and 4,900 in federal institutions. By 2003, state prisons held 250,900 drug offenders — 20 percent of the prisoner population, up from 6 percent in 1980. And drug offenders made up 55 percent of federal prisoners — up from 25 percent in 1980.²⁶

Starting in the mid-1980s, a crack epidemic and the resulting massive government response played a role in filling the prisons. But the groundwork had been laid years before crack appeared on the scene. A new attitude about incarceration had replaced the old doctrine of rehabilitation, which held that psychological counseling and other prison programs could transform convicts into law-abiding citizens.

Academic research seemed to support the new view that rehabilitation didn’t work and that prisons should punish rather than rehabilitate. Robert Martinson, an influential sociologist at City University of New York, wrote in 1974 that “with few and isolated exceptions, the rehabilitative efforts that have been reported so far have had no appreciable effect on recidivism.”²⁷

However, Martinson revised his sweeping conclusion four years later. In many cases psychological counseling in prison did keep recipients from returning to crime, he wrote in 1978. But by then Martinson’s initial assessment had been embraced. And the idea that trying to rehabilitate lawbreakers was a waste of time fit in well with an increasingly popular view that criminals didn’t need counseling — they needed to be locked up, and locked up longer.

In the 1970s, politicians of all ideological stripes were blaming the steady rise in crime on what they called a breakdown in the criminal justice system. One of Congress’ leading liberals, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., lent

his voice to the chorus — which also included Republican President Gerald R. Ford — demanding lengthier sentences.

“‘Revolving door’ justice convinces the criminal that his chances of actually being caught, tried, convicted and jailed are too slim to be taken seriously,” Kennedy wrote in an op-ed piece in *The New York Times* in 1975. “Our existing criminal justice system is no deterrent at all to violent crime in our society.”²⁸

Mandatory Minimums

Kennedy and many others pointed to laws throughout the country that mandated “indeterminate” sentences for specific crimes, such as prison terms of five to 15 years. Prison and parole authorities would decide when and if an inmate was rehabilitated enough to be released.²⁹

But the approach was conditioned on the results of rehabilitative programs that were often shoddy and poorly financed. Conservatives viewed parole boards as irresponsible or naïve — falling for convicts’ tales of reformation and letting hardened criminals back on the street.

Liberals, for their part, decried a system in which authorities had virtually total power to decide when a prisoner could be freed. The system lent itself to abuse, these critics said, especially since evaluating whether a prisoner had been rehabilitated was a highly subjective exercise.

By the time Kennedy called for a new system of “mandatory minimum” sentences, some states already had begun using that method, including New York. The state’s so-called Rockefeller Drug Laws of 1973 had been championed by liberal-leaning Republican Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller, who touted the harsh measures as a weapon against growing use of heroin.

The laws applied to all illegal drugs

Continued on p. 1016

Chronology

1970s-1980s

Escalating crime prompts many states and Congress to set harsh minimum sentences.

1970

Nation's violent crime rate more than doubles, jumping from 160.9 incidents per 100,000 population in 1960 to 363.5 per 100,000.

1973

New York state's "Rockefeller Drug Laws" establish long, fixed sentences for drug offenses.

1974

Influential study by sociologist Robert Martinson concludes that prison rehabilitation programs have "no appreciable effect on recidivism;" four years later, he reverses his conclusion.

1977

Liberal Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., introduces legislation mandating minimum sentences.

1983

All but two states have enacted mandatory minimum sentences.

1984

Congress passes Sentencing Reform Act, setting minimum sentences for a range of federal crimes.

1986

Crack cocaine epidemic coupled with intense media coverage prompts Congress to establish longer sentences for sales of crack than of powder cocaine.

1990s *Prison population booms, even as crime rates start falling.*

1990

Federal and state prison population soars to more than 739,000 inmates, more than double the 1980 population of about 315,000.

1991

Sister of a man imprisoned for five years for growing marijuana starts Families Against Mandatory Minimums, which helps lead campaign to change sentencing laws. . . . Federal Judge J. Lawrence Irving of San Diego resigns to protest mandatory minimums.

1993

Violent-crime rate begins falling after years of steady increase.

1999

U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno calls for the criminal justice system to help ex-inmates reenter society.

2000s *Prison system costs and high recidivism rates prompt some states to expand reentry programs; President George W. Bush prods Congress to pass Second Chance Act with funding for reentry projects.*

2002

Major Justice Department recidivism study finds that 67 percent of ex-prisoners in 15 biggest states are rearrested within three years, and 47 percent are convicted of new crimes and sent back to prison. . . . National Institute of Drug Abuse official says there is no physiological difference between the effects of crack cocaine and cocaine powder.

2003

Justice Department keeps focus on recidivism and soaring prison popu-

lations with announcement that federal and state prisons and local jails hold more than 2 million people.

2004

Violent crime rate drops to 463 incidents per 100,000 population, from 747 per 100,000 in 1993. . . . President Bush calls America "the land of the second chance" and advocates federal support for reentry programs.

2005

New York legislature authorizes (but doesn't require) judges to lower some Rockefeller Drug Law sentences — to 12 to 24 years for selling 3 oz. of crack cocaine, for instance, from the former mandatory 25 years to life.

2007

Number of prisoners released from federal and state prisons reaches more than 725,000. . . . Texas legislature rejects prison-construction plan in favor of spending on parole supervision and alternatives to incarceration.

2008

Bush signs Second Chance Act. . . . Total state spending to operate prisons rises to \$47 billion, even as some states cut prison costs.

2009

Justice Department awards \$28 million in Second Chance Act grants to programs across the country. . . . Senate and House committees hold hearings on strengthening reentry programs. . . . Two-thirds of ex-prisoners in California are reincarcerated for parole violations, according to new recidivism study. . . . Plan to cut California's prison population proposes new parole standards to avoid reincarceration. . . . Michigan expands statewide reentry program, pursues plans to close eight prisons.

Halfway House Puts Focus on Jobs

"If you want to change your life, this is where you can do it at."

Making pizzas for slightly more than minimum wage — it's not a job that puts a spring in the step of a middle-aged man who has lived the life of a drug dealer.

"It's a humbling experience, to say the least," says the man, a resident at the Montgomery County Pre-Release Center (PRC), a halfway house in the Washington suburb of Rockville, Md. "The money I make in a week, I used to make that in a couple of hours."

The man, who asks to be called Mr. Nolton, tends to think carefully before he speaks. A couple of decades cycling in and out of jail and prison make you cautious, he explains. "Most of my adult life has been drug sales and incarceration," he says. "Pretty much, I'm at the end of my rope, in the sense that I would like to have something wholesome in my life as well as make my family proud, and try to make the best of whatever 'normal' life is."

Mr. Nolton is fairly typical of the older residents at PRC, who are accepted in the final four to six months of their sentences. Although Maryland state prison inmates and some federal prisoners are allowed to apply, Montgomery County jail inmates make up the majority of the approximately 170 residents at the center, most of whom have been incarcerated previously. The center sits

just a block from the shopping centers and restaurants of bustling Rockville Pike. The nicely landscaped building looks like a small office and bears no identification as an outpost of the Montgomery County Correction and Rehabilitation Department.

"The population here is exactly representative of the population of the jail," says Director Stefan LoBuglio. PRC staff evaluate applicants for potential danger to the community, but the center is willing to accept people with long criminal records if there is evidence they can be trusted to stay out of trouble.

Founded in 1969 and well-known to advocates of prisoner reentry programs, the center emphasizes the practical in getting its residents — don't call them inmates — ready for the outside world. They start off living in two-person rooms, not cells or dormitories, and residents can earn their way up a waiting list for a single room with private bathroom by following rules, which include looking for a job every day until finding one.

To be sure, staff members wear badges on their belts, unauthorized departure is classified as escape and residents are tested for alcohol three times a day and for drugs three times a week. But such restrictions come off as fairly mild to people whose days were filled until recently with the sounds of cell doors clanking, and with outdoor views of fences and barbed wire.



CQ Press/Peter Kattel

A sculpture captures the mission of the Montgomery County Pre-Release Center: Lunchbox in hand, a former prisoner kisses his wife good-bye as he goes to work.

Continued from p. 1014

— cocaine as well as heroin (marijuana was removed from the list in 1977). Judges were required to impose sentences of 15 years to life for anyone convicted of selling two ounces of a drug, or possessing four ounces (amounts were later changed). The laws triggered a sixfold increase in the state prison population, from about 10,000 inmates in 1973 to more than 61,000 in 1992. By 1997, about a third of New York prisoners had been sentenced on drug charges — up from 9 percent in 1980.³⁰

As criticism of "indeterminate" laws mounted, Congress spent years devising ways to assure standardized sentences in federal court, so that two people convicted for the same crime before different judges would receive equal punishment. A 1977 measure sponsored by Kennedy also would have restricted parole. Congress took no action on the bill.³¹

The 1980 election of conservative Republican President Ronald W. Reagan reenergized the movement to toughen federal sentencing. In 1984, Congress passed the Sentencing Re-

form Act (SRA), which ordered judges to follow a series of "mandatory minimum" sentences for some crimes involving drugs and firearms. Additional minimum sentences were added later for other crimes. And the law abolished parole for all offenders serving time in federal prisons who had been convicted of federal crimes committed after Nov. 1, 1987.

"The SRA and the guidelines make rehabilitation a lower priority than other sentencing goals," said a history published by the U.S. Sentencing Commission, which the law established.³²

Above all, while prisons and jails are designed mainly to keep their populations locked up, the PRC's main mission is to help residents get out of jail and stay out — by helping them find jobs. Because today's job-application process has become virtually totally Web-centric, all residents have access to computers — restricted to job searches — and are required to obtain free Hot-mail e-mail addresses — to make monitoring easier.

Residents who need computer training get instructions in Web navigation and associated skills. Those who need help in regaining their driver's licenses can call on PRC staff for that as well.

And the center offers guidance in résumé-writing. "We have a lady who comes in on Wednesday," Work Release Coordinator Hillel Raskas tells a class of new arrivals. "She can make a résumé for anybody."

Raskas hands out a sample résumé that lists a "Career Exploration Certificate" from the Maryland Education Department at Jessup, Md. That's the location of a state prison, but leaving out that bit of information is all right, he says. He adds, though, that when an application asks about a criminal record, fill in the correct information. "Write, 'Will explain in interview.' Do not lie, do not leave it blank."

Some lucky residents have former jobs to go back to. One young man is expecting to return to a catering business. Another,



Residents at the Montgomery County center can use computers only for job searches. Computer training and help with résumé writing are also available.

CQ Press/Peter Katel

also barely out of his teens, said a cousin had arranged a supermarket job.

On a recent afternoon, a resident in his 20s walks into Unit Manager Chris Johnson's office and tells her with a big smile that he's landed a job after six weeks of looking — a \$10-an-hour gig in a call center. "I probably could have gotten a job quicker if I didn't set my sights so high," he says. His ambition was understandable. Before he was sentenced to

about five years on a drug conviction, he had been a computer engineering student.

Was his criminal record a problem in landing the job? "No, they're understaffed and overloaded," he tells Johnson. Still, she calls to verify the job offer and to make sure the employer knows of the young man's conviction. Everything checks out, and within days the man starts working.

While Mr. Nolton admits he does get a bit weary of the rules, he acknowledges that he owes a lot to the PRC. For one thing, the center banks his earnings, so he expects to have about \$500 saved up by the time his sentence is up in five months. So he'll be able to rent a studio apartment.

"This place is really based on the individual," he says. "If you want to change your life and you want a good way back into the community, this is where you can do it at."

— Peter Katel

The law-and-order trend was reinforced in the mid- and late-1980s after crack cocaine arrived on the scene. The cheap, smokable form of cocaine spawned a crime wave in the nation's inner cities as dealers fought for turf and addicts committed crimes. But mass-media reports supported the then widely accepted notion that crack's chemical properties triggered greater violence than other drugs.

Acting on that belief, Congress passed a 1986 law imposing a mandatory sentence of five years for selling five grams of crack (the weight of two pennies) — the same penalty imposed

for selling 500 grams (about a pound) of powder cocaine. And someone convicted of selling 11 lbs. of powder cocaine got the same sentence as a person convicted of selling less than 2 oz. of crack — 10 years.³³

Nearly two decades later, the view of crack as especially associated with violence still held sway in some law-enforcement circles. In 2002, Deputy Attorney General Larry D. Thompson told the U.S. Sentencing Commission that crack was more addictive than powder cocaine.³⁴ But Glenn Hanson, the acting director of the National

Institute on Drug Abuse, testified that crack and powdered cocaine's had precisely the same physiological effects.³⁵

Incarceration Boom

The Sentencing Reform Act ensured that more federal offenders were serving time and for longer sentences. By 2002, 86 percent of federal offenders were sent to prison — up from 69 percent in 1987 — and time served doubled from about 25 to 50 months.³⁶

Reentry Experts Try to Answer '\$64,000 Question'

"We still have much to learn about what works."

Advocates of reentry programs don't promise miracles — they know that reentry is a game of inches. In New York, an unspectacular-sounding 5.7 percent fewer ex-prisoners who participated in a reentry program sponsored by the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) were rearrested than ex-prisoners who didn't participate.¹

That might strike a layman as a small-bore result. But Dan Bloom, who directed the CEO evaluation for MDRC, a social-policy research organization, and is running a bigger analysis of job-focused reentry programs in four Midwestern cities, calls the statistic "promising," noting that, "A 5 percent difference is what you tend to see in social programs."

In addition, he says, because the cost of keeping a prisoner incarcerated is quite high, "You don't need a big difference in recidivism to potentially save a lot of money." A cost-benefit analysis of the CEO results is under way.

The data Bloom is collecting ultimately may help answer questions about the most effective ways to help ex-prisoners.

"There is so little [data] out there," Amy L. Solomon, a senior research associate at the Urban Institute's Justice Policy Center, recently told the Senate Subcommittee on Crime and Drugs. "We still have much to learn about what works."²

Criminal-justice specialists have been acknowledging as much for some time. "The \$64,000 question still remains: Which programs should government agencies, nonprofit organizations and faith-based communities invest in?" wrote Joan Petersilia, a professor at Stanford University Law School and a noted expert on probation and parole systems.³

Criminal-justice system veterans, however, have learned to temper expectations. "Programs can't replace good parenting," says Colorado Attorney General John Suthers, former director

of the state's prison system. He argues that recidivism reductions of 5 to 10 percent — though a worthwhile achievement — represent the limit of what reentry programs can achieve.

"If you want to look at a profile of America's prison population," Suthers says, "you can talk about minorities, drug problems, but the single defining characteristic is that two-thirds of them grew up in a home where they lived with their natural father." But for those who came from broken homes and didn't get solid early education, "It's too late for those guys," he says.

Suthers is a conservative Republican, but his conclusion is widely shared across the ideological spectrum.

But some still argue that more than modest results can be expected from reentry programs. "If we could implement effective programs for all returning prisoners, with all the resources needed, we could expect recidivism reductions of about 15-20 percent," said Jeremy Travis, president of John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City and a leading advocate of expanding reentry services.⁴

Whether the expectations are high or low, lawmakers — who control most program funding — demand statistics. In Michigan, which has one of the country's most comprehensive programs — the Michigan Prisoner ReEntry Initiative (MPRI) — administrators know better data is needed. "We cannot yet establish an empirical link between observed outcomes and MPRI processes, activities and spending," Dennis Schrantz, the state's deputy director of corrections, told a House subcommittee in March.⁵

On a more positive note, Schrantz said results thus far suggest MPRI is "contributing significantly to observed differences in outcomes, even though we cannot yet establish the causal links."⁶

State lawmakers were moving to the same beat: By 1983 48 states had enacted mandatory-minimum sentencing laws, and at least five had eliminated parole. By 1994, 11 states had enacted "three strikes" laws imposing life sentences with no parole for people convicted of a third felony (in some cases, a third violent felony).³⁷

As the wave of get-tough laws washed over the country, the handful of critics decrying the social and economic effects of driving up imprisonment got little support. "Many states realize corrections costs are out of control, and they're looking for ways

to save money," Alvin J. Bronstein, director of the American Civil Liberties Union's National Prison Project, said in 1994. "But at the same time they're talking about 'three strikes and you're out,' treating juveniles as adults and jamming through other laws that will jack up [prison] costs."³⁸

In fact, an unprecedented expansion of prison systems was occurring across the country. In the 1980s, the federal and state prison population more than doubled, from 315,974 to 739,980; by 2000 it was more than 1 million. For the entire 20-year period, the nation

saw a 318 percent increase in the number of people incarcerated.³⁹ To keep up, the number of state prisons rose from 592 in 1974 to 1,023 — a 73 percent increase.⁴⁰

As the size of the incarcerated population kept expanding, critics tried repeatedly to mobilize opposition to the trend. "While there is surprising agreement within the criminal justice community that we lock up too many people and that we keep them in prison far too long, the United States seems to be on the verge of embarking on the most extensive prison construction program in the history

For example, Schrantz noted, the number of parolees sent back to prison for new crimes dropped to 98 per 1,000, the lowest rate in four years; the number of prisoners returned to prison for “technical” parole violations dropped to 89 per 1,000, the lowest level since 1992; and increases in the overall prison population fell to an average of 150 new prisoners a year from 2003-2007, in contrast to annual average growth of 1,925 prisoners from 1984-2002.⁷

Statistics also are important for ferreting out the approaches that actually may do more harm than good. Counterintuitively, programs that deal exclusively with nonviolent, first-time offenders are especially risky, says Michael Thompson, director of the Council of State Governments’ Justice Center.

“Take a 40-year-old guy busted for writing bad checks, who has a fairly stable home life and a job — and a drinking problem,” Thompson says. “The reentry program says, I’m going to put you in intensive alcohol treatment and make sure your parole officer visits you often. So the guy’s got to leave his job to go to the parole office, and the parole officer visits his job site, and the guy gets fired. So he’s back in the bar drinking. If we’d left him alone, he probably would have been fine.”

Even as politicians and policy makers hunger for data, some experts have been urging researchers to expand their research



Stanford University Law School Professor Joan Petersilia calls for more evaluations of reentry programs.

goals beyond recidivism. Statistics should try to measure the extent of social reintegration, argued Petersilia. “For example, evaluations should measure whether clients are working, whether that work is full- or part time and whether the income derived is supporting families,” she wrote. “We should measure whether programs increase client sobriety and attendance at treatment programs. We should track whether programs help convicts become involved in community activities, in a church, or in ex-convict support groups or victim sensitivity sessions.”⁸

— Peter Katel

¹ Data furnished by MDRC.

² Testimony before hearing on “The First Line of Defense: Reducing Recidivism at the Local Level,” Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime and Drugs, Nov. 5, 2009, Webcast available at <http://judiciary.senate.gov/about/subcommittees/crime.cfm>.

³ Joan Petersilia, “What Works in Prisoner Reentry? Reviewing and Questioning the Evidence,” *Federal Probation*, September 2004, www.uscourts.gov/fedprob/September_2004/whatworks.html.

⁴ Testimony before hearing on “Successful Prisoner Reentry,” House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies, March 12, 2009.

⁵ Testimony before hearing on “Innovative Prisoner Reentry Programs,” House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies, March 11, 2009.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Petersilia, *op. cit.*

of the world,” journalist Michael Specter wrote in 1982 in *The Nation*, a left-liberal magazine.⁴¹

In 1986, a group of lawyers founded The Sentencing Project, a Washington-based advocacy and research organization, which lobbied to eliminate mandatory-minimum sentences as well as the disparity between crack and powder cocaine sentences.

Eventually, a few members of the law-enforcement community began speaking out against the toughened sentencing laws, especially those applying to drug offenses. “You’ve got murderers who get out sooner than

some kid who did some stupid thing with drugs,” said U.S. District Judge J. Lawrence Irving of San Diego, who was appointed to the bench by President Ronald Reagan in 1982 and resigned in 1991 rather than continue to hand down mandatory sentences. “These sentences are Draconian. It’s a tragedy.”⁴²

But the prevailing law-enforcement view in the 1990s was summed up by Paul McNulty, then a spokesman for the First Freedom Coalition, which advocated tough drug laws, and later a deputy attorney general in the George W. Bush administration. “You can’t get convicted [under] a drug law

unless you knew what you were doing,” McNulty said in 1993. “After everything this country has been through with drug trafficking, it’s very hard for people to look at these supposedly sympathetic cases and say, ‘Gee, we feel sorry for you.’ ”⁴³

Reentry Reality

As the debate over sentencing and incarceration policies sharpened during the 1990s, little attention was paid to the fact that eventually nearly all prisoners are released. Only when

U.S. Attorney General Reno raised the issue in 1999 did the question of how to reduce recidivism begin getting sustained attention.

"Too often, offenders leave prison and return to the community without supervision, without jobs, without housing," Reno said. "They quickly fall back into their old patterns of drug usage, gang activities and other crimes."⁴⁴

Borrowing from the "drug court" model that began in Miami when she was chief prosecutor there, Reno proposed that state and local governments set up "reentry courts." She envisioned judges approving reentry plans for individual ex-prisoners and monitoring progress along the lines of a parole system."⁴⁵

The court idea didn't spread widely. But Reno's proposal helped intensify the growing concern over the massive incarceration expansion that had been under way for more than two decades.

The fact that crime was going down perhaps helped to shift attitudes. The violent crime rate plummeted from 747 crimes per 100,000 in 1993 to 454 in 2008.⁴⁶

Amid the crime downturn came the startling news in 2003 that the nation's prison and jail population had passed the 2 million mark — the world's highest. "When violent crime rates were higher, many politicians were afraid to be seen as soft on crime," *The New York Times* said in an editorial. "But now that crime has receded and the public is more worried about taxes and budget deficits, it would not require extraordinary courage for elected officials to do the right thing and scale back our overuse of jails and prison cells."⁴⁷

In the following years, nearly half the states softened sentencing laws or probation-parole policies, mostly by diverting nonviolent drug offenders to non-prison treatment programs, expanding alternatives to incarceration for nonviolent offenders and reducing time

served behind bars while expanding probation and parole supervision.⁴⁸

Meanwhile, matters took an unexpected turn at the federal level. Activists who had been advocating federal support for state reentry programs had concluded that the George W. Bush administration, out of an ideological distrust for alternatives to incarceration and preoccupation with war and terrorism, would not support reentry programs. But in his 2004 State of the Union address, Bush said, referring to the 600,000 prisoners expected to be released that year: "If they can't find work or a home or help, they are much more likely to commit crime and return to prison."⁴⁹

Bush proposed a \$300 million "reentry initiative" to expand job training and placement, provide temporary housing and connect newly released prisoners to mentors to help guide them after incarceration. Support from the president and other conservative Republicans was critical to the passage of the Second Chance Act of 2007. The bipartisan alliance that pushed the bill through Congress included prison-reform advocates such as former National Institute of Justice director Travis and the Prison Fellowship's Nolan. Many religious conservatives, who counted Bush as an ally, saw a spiritual reason to give offenders a second chance.

House and Senate versions were sponsored by bipartisan groups that included Sens. Sam Brownback, R-Kan., and Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., and Reps. Danny Davis, D-Ill., and Chris Cannon, R-Utah. Nevertheless, the bill didn't make its way to Bush's desk until 2008, among other reasons because Sen. Tom Coburn, R-Okla., put a "hold" on it in 2006, stopping its progress in the Senate for a time. He said he supported the legislation but argued that other federal programs served the same purpose. In fiscal 2008-2009, Congress appropriated \$25 million for Second Chance Act grants and pilot projects across the country.⁵⁰ ■

CURRENT SITUATION

Upgrading Skills

Even as reentry advocates fight to spread basic programs around the country, some in the movement are starting to expand their goals.

In New York, a program is trying to take ex-prisoners beyond the world of low-paid, entry-level jobs. "I don't think anybody knows more than we do at the CEO how hard it is to get folks that first full-time job when they get out of prison, but it's not enough," says Center for Employment Opportunities executive director Tarlow. "People need to develop real careers and career pathways."

The CEO is in the second year of a fledgling program designed to open doors to high-paid, skilled trades, such as electrical work, plumbing and refrigeration. Criminal records aren't a bar to employment in those industries, as a rule. But trade school graduation is a prerequisite. Getting into trade school means passing tests, which can be an obstacle for people whose reading and math skills typically top out at middle-school levels.

That's where the CEO Academy comes in. Open to CEO participants working at entry-level jobs, the academy holds weeknight and Saturday classes in reading and math — geared toward helping participants pass trade-school entrance exams.

But it's a tough slog. The first 12-week class began with 35 participants. By the end of the session only 13 students remained. Eventually, 11 students entered trade school, and nine finished.

"Nothing is a slam dunk," says Marta Nelson, CEO's director of policy

Continued on p. 1022

At Issue:

Can reentry and rehabilitation programs reduce recidivism?



JEREMY TRAVIS
PRESIDENT, JOHN JAY COLLEGE OF
CRIMINAL JUSTICE

FROM TESTIMONY BEFORE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, JUSTICE, SCIENCE
AND RELATED AGENCIES, MARCH 12, 2009

the challenge we face is daunting: to make significant reductions in [the] very high rate of rearrest. The rate of failure — as defined by rearrest — is significantly higher in the initial months following release. If the risk of failure is highest in the first six months, then we should devote our efforts and resources to reducing the rate of failure in those months. It's a very simple but revolutionary concept: We align our resources to match the risk.

We know far more than we did a few decades ago about program effectiveness. Research allows us to see the potential for measurable reductions in recidivism. In fact, according to the best estimates of researchers in this field, if we could implement effective programs for all returning prisoners, with all the resources needed, we could expect recidivism reductions of about 15-20 percent. And, we can also state with great confidence that these investments would be cost-effective: They would pay for themselves by reducing future criminal justice and corrections costs.

We should not be satisfied with these results. In my opinion, we can only achieve results that match the magnitude of the reentry phenomenon if we recognize that our approach has been too timid. We have been constrained by a medical model that focuses on individual-level interventions, rather than also embracing an ecological model that focuses simultaneously on the community context within which individuals are struggling to thrive after prison. The next chapter of innovation in this area should test ideas that attempt to change the environment to which individuals return home.

Around the country, there are a number of demonstration projects that are testing a very new reentry model — a community-based approach to reentry. Recognizing that some communities are experiencing very high rates of incarceration and reentry, these projects approach reentry as a community phenomenon. These programs create coalitions of community organizations to interact with every person returning home from prison. They attempt to create a different climate in the neighborhood, one promoting successful reintegration.

These demonstration efforts represent a new frontier in reentry innovation. They do not focus exclusively on individual-level interventions. Rather, they create a coalition of support for individuals returning from prisons and jails, bring together law enforcement and community leaders, communicate clearly about the consequences of illegal behavior and provide a clear pathway out of a life of antisocial conduct.



JAMES M. BYRNE
PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL
JUSTICE AND CRIMINOLOGY, UNIVERSITY
OF MASSACHUSETTS

FROM TESTIMONY BEFORE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, JUSTICE, SCIENCE
AND RELATED AGENCIES, MARCH 12, 2009

rehabilitation is back in vogue in the United States. Individual-offender rehabilitation is being presented to the public at large — and to federal and state policy makers — as the single-most-effective crime-control strategy. The argument is simple, seductive and not all that offender-friendly: Don't provide convicted offenders with treatment because it will help them as individuals. We need to provide rehabilitation because the provision of rehabilitation has been demonstrated to significantly reduce the likelihood of re-offending, which makes us — and our communities — safer. We are doing it for ourselves and our communities.

Some would argue that this represents one of the big lies of individual-offender rehabilitation, because even significant reductions in the recidivism [rate] in this country will not likely change the crime rates of most communities, because [ex-] offenders do not live — in large numbers — in most communities. They live in a small number of high crime/poverty pocket neighborhoods in a handful of states. Since residents of these communities do not have the social capital to adequately address the long-standing problems found in high-risk, poverty pocket areas, the prospects for community change are bleak.

We do know that traditional probation and parole programs are not as effective today as they were 30 years ago; we just don't know why. Any serious discussion of new strategies for addressing the prison reentry problem must begin with an examination of the reasons why these programs are ineffective.

Although the reported [results] for prison treatment and programs are modest (a 10 percent reduction in recidivism upon release using standard follow-up measures), there is reason to anticipate improvements in these effects in prison systems designed to focus on offender change rather than short-term offender control.

I suspect that the general public — already wary of the prospects for individual-offender change — will be expecting a bit more for their investment in rehabilitation than marginal reductions in offender recidivism. If we cannot demonstrate the link between participation in the next generation of individual-offender rehabilitation programs and community protection, then support for rehabilitation, tenuous at best, will quickly dissipate. While the general public appears to believe in the possibility of individual-offender change, I think you will find that most of us are skeptical about the probability of individual-offender change, particularly among individuals with serious substance-abuse and/or mental health problems.

Continued from p. 1020

and planning, who directs the program. Setbacks that have forced students out of the program, she says, include the shock of doing classroom work after many years out of school, health problems and rearrests — sometimes for something as simple as “leaving the state to visit a son and violating parole.”

However, the second academy class of 62 had 42 graduates, and 31 were expected to graduate from trade school in late November. The program is now recruiting for a third class of 100.

So far, two trade-school graduates have landed skilled jobs with contractors. But CEO expects that number to go up now that a full-time employment counselor has been hired for the program.

CEO may be in a better position than most reentry programs to move ex-prisoners beyond the low-wage job scene. Established in the late 1970s as a project of the Washington-based Vera Institute of Justice, the organization has been on its own since 1996, funded by foundation grants and government contracts.

As participants work in their subsidized jobs, CEO helps them find work in the open economy. “We focus on small- to medium-size businesses that don’t have human-resources departments, and act as their HR department,” Tarlow says. “Say they want to hire a person off the street who doesn’t have a felony conviction. They’d have to do a background check; it costs them to advertise. With

us, I’m saying right up front that my client has a felony conviction, but I’m telling you this person is working right now; I’ve got his attendance record right in front of me. And in the worst-case scenario, if it doesn’t work out, I’ll send you another person the next day.”

California Meltdown

The country’s biggest prison system has become the national example for what not to do when a state runs out of money to keep expanding incarceration.



Inmates are stacked three-high in a gymnasium at Mule Creek State Prison in Ione, Calif. A panel of federal judges recently ordered California to reduce its prison population over two years from 150,000 to about 115,000. All California prisoners must be released on parole, so parole officers have little time to supervise or assist prisoners. Thousands of parolees a year are sent back to prison for parole violations.

Getty Images/Justin Sullivan

The situation in California shows states “what will happen if they ignore the problem or say, ‘There’s not much we can do,’ ” says Michael Thompson, director of the Council of State Governments’ National Justice Center, which advises states on reentry.

In mid-November, in the latest installment of a long-running crisis and legal battle, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger’s administration finally came up with a plan to reduce the state’s prison population over two years from 150,000 to about 115,000 — or 137 percent of the prisons’ 84,000 capacity.⁵¹ The reduction was ordered by a panel of federal judges.⁵²

The bulging population partly reflects the state’s overwhelmed parole system. California is one of a handful of states that require all prisoners to be released on parole, effectively swamping parole officers who have little time to supervise or assist prisoners.

Consequently, thousands of parolees a year are sent back to prison for violating the terms of their release. But with reentry services facing severe budgetary pressures, even more released prisoners may end up back behind bars. (See chart, p. 1011.)

California’s Division of Adult Probation Operations, which runs reentry services, expects to lose \$41 million in funding, which director Robert Ambroselli said will be accomplished by delaying the activation of new reentry program sites, but no closures of current programs. “However . . . the implementation of other new programs is not being considered at this time,” he pointed out.⁵³

Existing programs — which help with housing, drug counseling and job searches — served about 18,449 parolees in California during the first nine months of 2009.

Though those services won't be expanded, a new state plan will exempt "low-level, lower-risk offenders" from being placed on active parole, which will reduce the number of offenders returning to prison for parole violations, according to the state Corrections and Rehabilitation Department.⁵⁴

But the new plan apparently didn't resolve the political conflict over criminal-justice policy that accompanied the steady expansion of the prison population. Schwarzenegger will propose legislation next year that lawmakers rejected in 2009, which would — among other things — raise the threshold for grand theft from \$400 to \$950, allowing people convicted of stealing less to be sent to jail instead of prison. Those proposals prompted Republican Assemblyman Jim Nielsen to call the plan an "egregious compromise of justice." He wants the state to build more prisons.⁵⁵

Meanwhile, a Democratic lawmaker has proposed changing the sentencing guidelines. And state Sen. Mark Leno, a Democrat from the San Francisco Bay Area, complained that the plan calls for 2,400 new prison beds and transferring 5,000 inmates to privately owned prisons.

"Building new beds doesn't address the problem that caused the symptom," he said.⁵⁶ ■

OUTLOOK

Change in Tone

The growing emphasis on reentry is changing the tone and substance

of the long-polarized criminal-justice policy debate. Conservatives typically have insisted on locking up criminals for longer sentences, while liberals generally oppose mass incarceration and focus on social inequities that influence most offenders' backgrounds.

Traces of that debate certainly remain, but the focus has shifted to questions on how to boost reentry programs by, among other things, improving prisoners' and ex-prisoners' skills and expanding parole supervision to include reentry assistance.

"I won't say that reentry will be a well-oiled machine, but it will be a significant part of the rehabilitation process," says Florida state Sen. Crist, a Republican. For one thing, he predicts, the economy will need more of the kinds of labor ex-prisoners can provide.

"[With] the United States getting tougher on immigration, there's going to be a significant reduction of entry-level workers for jobs that most Americans don't want to do," Crist says. "And with technology advancing and more people in the educational system and moving toward higher-paying opportunities, there's going to be a need for construction, lawn care and restaurant workers — all these things have to be done by somebody."

At the policy end, however, officials must decide which reentry methods work best. "Right now is the crossroads," says Thompson, of the Council of State Governments' Justice Center. "The federal government is making a significant investment in testing and promoting certain reentry strategies, and states are deciding whether to scale back or build in some of these areas."

Meanwhile, he adds, "Corrections professionals recognize that if they don't generate the gains that leaders in the field said were possible, they'll have missed the key window of opportunity. And if they close the window, they'll exacerbate the prison-population problem."

Nolan of Prison Fellowship acknowledges that when ex-prisoners commit crimes it poses setbacks for reentry programs. "Things like that hurt the movement," he says.

Overall, however, Nolan is confident the reentry movement will lower recidivism. "Jesus wouldn't call us to something ineffective," he says.

However, an advocate of lowering the reliance on prison warns that reentry programs probably won't make a major dent in the national prison population. "It's slowly starting to shift," says Marc Mauer, executive director of the Sentencing Project, "but the scale is so enormous that it will take a much more substantial policy shift to turn things around. There's no reason to expect a change in the next five years."

And prison staffers are still skeptical about reentry programs. "Our guys are saying lots of bad characters are getting released," says Grieshaber of the Michigan corrections workers' union. "That's our bias. But we're holding our breath hoping we don't have a lot of bad things happening out there. I'm not talking about one dramatic thing — that can happen. I'm talking about an aggregation of events, where after a year or two you say, 'Oh, my God.'"

Skeptics are still to be found in the policy world as well. "I would suspect that the number of people released from prison will continue to be high," says Mulhausen of the Heritage Foundation. "Reentry is now the buzzword. In 10 years we'll probably be talking about a whole new thing."

But, in a sign of how the reentry movement has created a change in tone, Mulhausen adds, "I'm willing to admit that some things work, but they often don't work spectacularly well. We should do these programs, but they're not the magic bullet."

Still, some veterans of the prisoner reentry world are confident that prospects for improvement are excellent.

Tarlow of the Center for Employment Opportunities draws a connection between the reentry movement and the welfare reform law of 1996. The act forced mothers on public assistance into the workforce, in theory setting a better role model for their children.⁵⁷ The next step, she says, is to examine the effects on children of having their fathers incarcerated.

"People have come to realize that children have two parents, and that the father often has a connection to the criminal justice system," Tarlow says. "I believe that 10 years from now, this burgeoning movement about the importance of young men, who are fathers, coming home from jail and prison and needing work will really take hold," she says. "I think you're going to see an easier path from prison to work."⁵⁸

Notes

¹ Heather C. West and William J. Sabol, "Prisoners in 2007," Bureau of Justice Statistics, Department of Justice, updated May 12, 2009, www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/p07.pdf. Pre-2000 statistics furnished by Bureau of Justice Statistics (not available online).

² Christine S. Scott-Hayward, "The Fiscal Crisis in Corrections: Rethinking Policies and Practices," Vera Institute of Justice, July 2009, p. 3, www.vera.org/files/The-fiscal-crisis-in-corrections_July-2009.pdf.

³ Amy L. Solomon, *et al.*, "From Prison to Work: The Employment Dimensions of Prisoner Reentry," Urban Institute, Justice Policy Center, 2004, p. 8, www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411097_From_Prison_to_Work.pdf.

⁴ Jim Suhr, "States target prisons for cuts, raising worries," *The Associated Press*, July 28, 2009; "The Michigan Prisoner ReEntry Initiative Progress Snapshot," March 2009, www.fce.msu.edu/Family_Impact_Seminars/pdf/FIS-Spring2009/Family_Impact_Seminar_MPRI_Snapshot_030809.pdf.

⁵ Jamal Thalji, "Legislators Look West for Prison Solution," *St. Petersburg Times*, Nov. 18, 2009, p. B1; "Justice Reinvestment in Texas," Council of State Governments Justice Center, April 2009, <http://justicereinvestment.org/states/texas/pubmaps-tx>.

⁶ Bob Egelko, "State submits plan to reduce prison population," *San Francisco Chronicle*, Nov. 13, 2009, www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/11/12/MNMFV1AJNHV.DTL; "Defendants' Response to Three-Judge Court's Oct. 21, 2009 Order," Case3:01-cv-01351-TEH Document2274, Nov. 12, 2009, www.cdc.ca.gov/News/2009_Press_Releases/docs/11-12_Filed-Stamped_Filing.pdf.

⁷ "Successful Prisoner Reentry," House Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies, March 12, 2009.

⁸ "Remarks as Prepared for Delivery by Attorney General Eric Holder," July 9, 2009, www.justice.gov/ag/speeches/2009/ag-speech-090709.html.

⁹ "State of the Union Address," Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, Jan. 20, 2004, <http://millercenter.org/scripps/archive/speeches/detail/4542>.

¹⁰ Caroline Wolf Harlow, "Education and Correctional Populations," Bureau of Justice Sta-

tistics, U.S. Justice Department, January 2003, www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/ecp.pdf.

¹¹ James J. Stephan, "State Prison Expenditures, 2001," Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Justice Department, June 2004, www.ojp.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/spe01.pdf.

¹² Ryken Grattet, *et al.*, "Parole Violations and Revocations in California: Analysis and Suggestions for Action," *Federal Probation*, June 2009, pp. 2-4, <http://ucicorrections.seweb.uci.edu/sites/ucicorrections.seweb.uci.edu/files/Parole%20Violations%20and%20Revocations%20in%20CA.pdf>.

¹³ Jennifer Warren, "He found a calling in prison," *Los Angeles Times*, July 5, 2007, p. A1.

¹⁴ Ryan S. King, *et al.*, "Incarceration and Crime: A Complex Relationship," Sentencing Project, 2005, pp. 3-4, www.sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/inc_iandc_complex.pdf.

¹⁵ Solomon, *et al.*, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Christy Visser, *et al.*, "Employment After Prison: A Longitudinal Study of Releasees in Three States," Urban Institute, Justice Policy Center, October 2008, www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411778_employment_after_prison.pdf.

¹⁸ "Transitional Jobs Reentry Demonstration," The Joyce Foundation, July 2009, www.mdc.org/publications/522/policybrief.pdf.

¹⁹ "Michigan Unemployment Rate (Seasonally Adjusted)," September 2009, Michigan.gov, www.milmi.org.

²⁰ Kathy Amoroso, "Mayors Highlight Innovative Strategies for Aiding Prisoner Reentry at National Summit," United States Conference of Mayors, March 10, 2008, http://usmayors.org/usmayornewspaper/documents/03_10_08/pg14_prisoner_reentry.asp.

²¹ "Successful Prisoner Reentry," *op. cit.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Except where otherwise indicated, this subsection draws on Doris Layton MacKenzie, *What Works in Corrections: Reducing the Criminal Activities of Offenders and Delinquents* (2006).

²⁵ "Reported Crime in the United States," Bureau of Justice Statistics, updated Jan. 12, 2009, <http://bjsdata.ojp.usdoj.gov/dataonline/Search/Crime/State/statebystaterun.cfm?stateid=52>. For background, see Peter Katel, "Prison Reform," *CQ Researcher*, April 6, 2007, pp. 289-312.

²⁶ Marc Mauer and Ryan S. King, "A 25-year Quagmire: The War on Drugs and its Impact on American Society," The Sentencing Project, September 2007, pp. 9-10, www.sentencingpro

About the Author



Peter Katel is a *CQ Researcher* staff writer who previously reported on Haiti and Latin America for *Time* and *Newsweek* and covered the Southwest for newspapers in New Mexico. He has received several journalism awards, including the Bartolomé Mitre Award for coverage of drug trafficking, from the Inter-American Press Association. He holds an A.B. in university studies from the University of New Mexico. His recent reports include "Mexico's Drug War," "Hate Groups" and "Legalizing Marijuana."

ject.org/doc/publications/dp_25yearquagmire.pdf. For background see Peter Katel, "War on Drugs," *CQ Researcher*, June 2, 2006, pp. 481-504.

²⁷ Quoted in MacKenzie, *op. cit.*

²⁸ Edward M. Kennedy, "Punishing the Offenders," *The New York Times*, Dec. 6, 1975.

²⁹ Except where otherwise indicated, this subsection draws on MacKenzie, *op. cit.*

³⁰ Aaron D. Wilson, "Rockefeller Drug Laws Information Sheet," Partnership for Responsible Drug Information, Aug. 7, 2000, www.prdi.org/rocklawfact.html.

³¹ Paul J. Hofer, *et al.*, "Fifteen Years of Guidelines Sentencing: An Assessment of How Well the Federal Criminal Justice System is Achieving the Goals of Sentencing Reform," U.S. Sentencing Commission, November 2004, pp. 1-35, www.ussc.gov/15_year/15_year_study_full.pdf.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³³ Mauer and King, *op. cit.*, pp. 9, 22. Laura Murphy, "Testimony to U.S. Sentencing Commission," March 19, 2002, www.aclu.org/racial-justice/drug-law-reform/immigrants-rights_womens-rights/testimony-washington-national-office-

³⁴ "Summary of Public Hearings on Cocaine Sentencing Policy," U.S. Sentencing Commission, 2002, pp. E-1-E-2, www.ussc.gov/r_congress/02crack/AppE.pdf.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. E-3.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 138-139.

³⁷ Larry Rohter, "In Wave of Anticrime Fervor, States Rush to Adopt Laws," *The New York Times*, May 10, 1994, p. A1; Stuart Taylor Jr., "Strict Penalties for Criminals: Pendulum of Feeling Swings," *The New York Times*, Dec. 13, 1983, p. A1.

³⁸ Quoted in William Claiborne, "Making Sentences Fit the Prisons," *The Washington Post*, July 16, 1994, p. A1.

³⁹ Sarah Lawrence and Jeremy Travis, "The New Landscape of Imprisonment: Mapping America's Prison Expansion," Urban Institute, April 2004, p. 7, www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/410994_mapping_prisons.pdf.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁴¹ Michael Specter, "The Untried Alternative to Prisons," *The Nation*, March 13, 1982, p. 300.

⁴² Alexandra Marks, "Rolling back stiff drug sentences," *The Christian Science Monitor*, Dec. 8, 1998, p. 1.

⁴³ Dirk Johnson, "As Mandatory Terms Pack Prisons, Experts Ask, Is Tougher Too Tough?" *The New York Times*, Nov. 8, 1993, p. A16.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Center for Employment Opportunities, 32 Broadway, 15th Floor, New York, NY 10004; (212) 422-4430; www.ceoworks.org/index.php. Helps connect ex-prisoners with the job market.

Heritage Foundation, 214 Massachusetts Ave., N.E., Washington, DC 20002-4999; (202) 546-4400. A research and educational institute that formulates and promotes conservative public policies.

Michigan Prisoner ReEntry Initiative, Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC), 206 E. Michigan Ave., Grandview Plaza, Lansing, MI 48933; (517) 373-3653; www.michigan.gov/reentry. Offers detailed information on reentry operations and goals.

National Institute of Justice, 810 7th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20531; (202) 307-2942; www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/topics/corrections/reentry/welcome.htm. Provides a variety of studies and other information on reentry.

National Reentry Resource Center, 100 Wall St., 20th Floor, New York, NY 10005; (646) 383-5721; info@nationalreentryresourcecenter.org. Offers all kinds of technical assistance to local governments.

Prisoner Reentry Institute, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, 555 W. 57th St., 6th Floor, New York, NY 10019; (212) 484-1399; www.jjay.cuny.edu/centers/prisoner_reentry_institute/2705.htm. Publishes research and holds conferences, all aimed at a specialist audience.

Urban Institute, 2100 M St., N.W., Washington, DC 20037; (202) 833-7200; www.urban.org/Pressroom/prisonerreentry.cfm. A nonpartisan social-policy organization that sponsors extensive research on reentry.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Michael J. Sniffen, "Reno Wants Prisoner Release Help," *The Associated Press*, Oct. 14, 1999.

⁴⁵ Quoted in *ibid.* For background, see Mary H. Cooper, "Drug-Policy Debate," *CQ Researcher*, July 28, 2000, pp. 593-624.

⁴⁶ "Crime in the United States by Volume and Rate per 100,000 Inhabitants, 1989-2008," FBI Uniform Crime Report, September 2009, www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2008/data/table_01.html.

⁴⁷ "Two Million Inmates, And Counting," *The New York Times*, April 9, 2003, p. A18.

⁴⁸ Ryan S. King, "Changing Direction? State Sentencing Reforms 2004-2006," *The Sentencing Project*, March 2007, www.sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/sentencingreformforweb.pdf.

⁴⁹ "State of the Union Address," *op. cit.*

⁵⁰ "President Bush to Sign Unprecedented Prisoner Reentry Legislation," Reentry Policy Council, Council of State Governments, April 8, 2008, http://reentrypolicy.org/announcements/bush_sign_SCA; "Appropriations Update," Reentry Policy Council, undated, www.reentrypolicy.org/

www.reentrypolicy.org/government_affairs/second_chance_act#OVERVIEW; Chris Suelleontrop, "The Right Has a Jailhouse Conversion," *The New York Times Magazine*, Dec. 24, 2006, p. 47.

⁵¹ Egelko, *op. cit.*

⁵² Carol J. Williams, "State gets two years to cut 43,000 from prisons," *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 5, 2009, p. A1.

⁵³ "Defendants' Response to Three-Judge Court's October 21, 2009 Order," *op. cit.*

⁵⁴ "CDCR Files Response to Federal Three Judge Panel on Prison Management Plan," California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Nov. 12, 2009, www.cdcr.ca.gov/News/2009_Press_Releases/Nov_12.html.

⁵⁵ Quoted in Egelko, *op. cit.*

⁵⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*

⁵⁷ For background, see Sarah Glazer, "Welfare Reform," *CQ Researcher*, Aug. 3, 2001, pp. 601-632.

⁵⁸ For background, see Kathy Koch, "Fatherhood Movement," *CQ Researcher*, June 2, 2000, pp. 473-496.

Bibliography

Selected Sources

Books

Kleiman, Mark A.R., *When Brute Force Fails: How to Have Less Crime and Less Punishment*, Princeton University Press, 2009.

A leading criminal justice policy expert, now at the University of California, Los Angeles, examines measures designed to lessen reliance on incarceration, including recidivism reduction.

MacKenzie, Doris Layton, *What Works in Corrections: Reducing the Criminal Activities of Offenders and Delinquents*, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

A University of Maryland criminologist examines the literature on reentry programs to find and analyze effective approaches.

Petersilia, Joan, *When Prisoners Come Home: Parole and Prisoner Reentry*, Oxford University Press, 2009.

A national expert on prisons examines reentry systems as they now exist and how to improve them.

Travis, Jeremy, *But They All Come Back: Facing the Challenges of Prisoner Reentry*, Urban Institute Press, 2005.

The leading advocate of reentry, now president of John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City, makes a case for expanding reentry programs.

Articles

Barnett, Ron, "Incarcerated getting educated," *USA Today*, Sept. 25, 2009, p. A3.

State prisons across the country are stepping up education programs to better inmates' reentry chances.

Bell, Dawson, "Prisons — 2nd Chance: 2 Succeed, 2 Struggle," *Detroit Free Press*, May 25, 2009, p. A7.

In part of a package of stories about Michigan's reentry system, a reporter chronicles the experiences of four newly released prisoners.

Buntin, John, "Job Freedom: Can the lessons of welfare reform be applied to the prison system?" *Governing*, August 2009, www.governing.com/article/job-freedom.

A reporter for a magazine for government administrators examines the single-minded dedication to finding jobs that characterizes a county-run pre-release center in Maryland.

Freedman, Samuel G., "Unlikely Allies on a Former Wedge Issue," *The New York Times*, June 28, 2008, p. B5.

A religion columnist reports on Christian conservatives joining forces with liberal advocates of alternatives to incarceration.

Gramlich, John, "At least 26 states spend less on prisons," *Stateline.org*, Aug. 11, 2009, www.stateline.org/live/details/story?contentId=418338.

A news service covering state governments reports on a trend of cutting back spending on prisons.

Miller, Carol Marbin, "Prison system change sought," *The Miami Herald*, June 24, 2009, p. B1.

Support builds in Florida for reducing incarceration by methods that include expanding reentry programs.

Rothfeld, Michael, "Gov. says prisons 'collapsing,'" *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 20, 2009, p. A4.

California's governor paints a grim picture in the wake of a riot at a severely overcrowded state prison.

Reports and Studies

Brazzell, Diana, and Nancy G. La Vigne, "Prisoner Reentry in Houston: Community Perspectives," The Urban Institute, May 2009, www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411901_prisoner_reentry_houston.pdf.

The high-crime communities to which most ex-prisoners return reflect the tensions of reentry.

"Criminal Justice Primer: Policy Priorities for the 111th Congress," The Sentencing Project, 2009, www.sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/cjprimer2009.pdf.

A leading think tank advocating alternatives to prison presents a case for increased reentry funding, among other issues.

Harlow, Caroline Wolf, "Education and Correctional Populations," Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Justice Department, April 15, 2003, www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/ecp.pdf.

A federal statistician details an issue widely discussed in policy circles — the educational shortcomings of most prison inmates.

"The Power of Work: The Center for Employment Opportunities Comprehensive Prisoner Reentry Program," Center for Employment Opportunities and MDRC, March 2006, www.mdrc.org/publications/426/full.pdf.

A New York-based nonprofit describes its strategy for helping ex-prisoners find work.

Visher, Christy, et al., "Employment After Prison: A Longitudinal Study of Releasees in Three States," Urban Institute, Justice Policy Center, October 2008, www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411778_employment_after_prison.pdf.

Reentry researchers present results on the importance of prison jobs and job-training to post-prison employment success.

The Next Step:

Additional Articles from Current Periodicals

Job Training

Essley, Liz, "Ex-Offenders Can't Find Jobs," *The Washington Times*, July 1, 2009, p. A15.

A proposed bill in the District of Columbia would help released prisoners avoid hiring bias during employment searches.

Owen, Mary, "Work Awaits After Prison," *Chicago Tribune*, May 8, 2009, p. C4.

A Chicago program trains and mentors former prisoners for jobs in a neighborhood that has the highest concentration of former prisoners in the city.

Saltzman, Jonathan, and Andrea Estes, "Senate to Take Up Crime Records," *The Boston Globe*, Nov. 18, 2009, p. B1.

The Massachusetts state Senate is considering a bill that would make it easier for inmates to find jobs after they are released from prison.

Varnon, Rob, "Bridgeport Gives Ex-Cons Shot at Jobs," *Connecticut Post*, April 28, 2009.

A program in Bridgeport, Conn., is teaching basic reading and math skills and providing job training to non-violent offenders who have gotten out of prison within the past 180 days.

Overcrowding

Boone, Rebecca, "Idaho Not in Contempt for Crowding at State Prison," *Lewiston (Idaho) Morning Tribune*, June 4, 2009.

A federal judge has decided not to hold Idaho in contempt for temporarily overcrowding a correctional institution after a housing unit was destroyed during a riot.

Rothfeld, Michael, "Judges Reject State Bid to Cut Prison Crowding," *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 22, 2009, p. A3.

Three federal judges have rejected Gov. Schwarzenegger's proposal to reduce overcrowding in California prisons.

Rushton, Bruce, "Illinois, Other States Mull Early Release for Prison Inmates," *Springfield (Missouri) News-Leader*, July 13, 2009, p. 1.

Illinois may release some of its inmates early in order to ease the burden on the state's prison system.

Saltzman, Jonathan, "Prisoner Crowding Is Cited After Riot," *The Boston Globe*, July 7, 2009, p. B1.

A riot at a prison in Cambridge, Mass., has put the spotlight on overcrowding in the state's jails.

Recidivism Rates

Echegaray, Chris, "Tennessee Has High Rate of Repeat DUI Arrests," *The Tennessean*, Aug. 4, 2009.

More than 20 percent of people arrested for drunken driving in Tennessee were arrested again on the same charge.

Vogel, Ed, "Prisons Expert Says Nevada Among Lowest in Recidivism," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, Oct. 21, 2009, p. 8B.

Nevada has one of the lowest recidivism rates in the country, but that may be due to prisoners who eventually end up in California prisons.

Reentry Programs

Bell, Dawson, "Released Prisoners Get Training, Support," *Detroit Free Press*, May 25, 2009, p. 7A.

The Michigan Prisoner Re-Entry Initiative has significantly reduced the number of parolees who return to prison.

Hamilton, Matthew, "Program Aimed At Dropping Recidivism," *News-Star (Louisiana)*, March 15, 2009, p. 1A.

A proposed \$750,000 grant for a correctional center in Louisiana would reduce recidivism rates in the area by 10 percent, according to law enforcement officials.

Madden, Charles, "Taking a One-Step Approach to Solving Re-Entry Problems," *News Journal (Delaware)*, May 17, 2009, p. 23A.

The widespread belief that recidivism is a public safety and health issue has prompted the governor of Delaware to prioritize reentry programs.

Smith, Bruce C., "State to Expand Re-Entry Facility Model," *Indianapolis Star*, Feb. 21, 2009, p. 4X.

Indiana wants to implement more reentry facilities in minimum-security prisons across the state.

CITING CQ RESEARCHER

Sample formats for citing these reports in a bibliography include the ones listed below. Preferred styles and formats vary, so please check with your instructor or professor.

MLA STYLE

Jost, Kenneth. "Rethinking the Death Penalty." *CQ Researcher* 16 Nov. 2001: 945-68.

APA STYLE

Jost, K. (2001, November 16). Rethinking the death penalty. *CQ Researcher*, 11, 945-968.

CHICAGO STYLE

Jost, Kenneth. "Rethinking the Death Penalty." *CQ Researcher*, November 16, 2001, 945-968.

In-depth Reports on Issues in the News

Are you writing a paper?

Need backup for a debate?

Want to become an expert on an issue?

For more than 80 years, students have turned to *CQ Researcher* for in-depth reporting on issues in the news. Reports on a full range of political and social issues are now available. Following is a selection of recent reports:

Civil Liberties

Closing Guantánamo, 2/09
Affirmative Action, 10/08
Gay Marriage Showdowns, 9/08
America's Border Fence, 9/08
Immigration Debate, 2/08

Crime/Law

Interrogating the CIA, 9/09
Examining Forensics, 7/09
Legalizing Marijuana, 6/09
Wrongful Convictions, 4/09
Prostitution Debate, 5/08

Education

Value of a College Education, 11/09
Financial Literacy, 9/09
Reading Crisis? 2/08
Discipline in Schools, 2/08

Environment/Society

Women in the Military, 11/09
Conspiracy Theories, 10/09
Human Spaceflight, 10/09
Gays in the Military, 9/09
Energy and Climate, 7/09
Future of Books, 5/09

Health/Safety

Medication Abuse, 10/09
Nuclear Disarmament, 10/09
Health-Care Reform, 8/09
Straining the Safety Net, 7/09
Treating Depression, 6/09
Reproductive Ethics, 5/09

Politics/Economy

State Budget Crisis, 9/09
Business Bankruptcy, 4/09
Future of the GOP, 3/09
Middle-Class Squeeze, 3/09

Upcoming Reports

Bilingual Education, 12/11/09

Homelessness, 12/18/09

Animal Rights, 1/8/10

ACCESS

CQ Researcher is available in print and online. For access, visit your library or www.cqresearcher.com.

STAY CURRENT

To receive notice of upcoming *CQ Researcher* reports, or learn more about *CQ Researcher* products, subscribe to the free e-mail newsletters, *CQ Researcher Alert!* and *CQ Researcher News*: <http://cqpress.com/newsletters>.

PURCHASE

To purchase a *CQ Researcher* report in print or electronic format (PDF), visit www.cqpress.com or call 866-427-7737. Single reports start at \$15. Bulk purchase discounts and electronic-rights licensing are also available.

SUBSCRIBE

Annual full-service *CQ Researcher* subscriptions—including 44 reports a year, monthly index updates, and a bound volume—start at \$803. Add \$25 for domestic postage.

CQ Researcher Online offers a backfile from 1991 and a number of tools to simplify research. For pricing information, call 800-834-9020, ext. 1906, or e-mail librarysales@cqpress.com.

CQ RESEARCHER PLUS ARCHIVE

GET ONLINE ACCESS TO VITAL
ISSUES FROM 1923 TO THE PRESENT



CQ Researcher Plus Archive delivers fast, online access to every *CQ Researcher* report from 1991 to the present, PLUS lets you explore the complete archive of *Editorial Research Reports**

from 1923-1990. Search and browse more than 3,600 in-depth reports.

Loaded with handy online features, *CQ Researcher Plus Archive* provides the trustworthy reporting and the advanced online functionality today's researchers demand. The new "Issue Tracker" feature provides quick links to past and present reports on the specific topics you need.

For a free trial, visit <http://library.cqpress.com/trials>.

For pricing information, call 1-800-834-9020, ext. 1906 or e-mail librarymarketing@cqpress.com.

*Editorial Research Reports, the predecessor to *CQ Researcher*, provides the same expert, nonpartisan reporting on the vital issues that have shaped our society.

CQ Press • 2300 N Street, NW, Suite 800 • Washington, DC 20037